

# EXECUTIVE VISION

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A Forum for Georgia Government Leaders

## calendar

### **AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **International Conference & Exposition**

*May 21 – 25 Dallas, Texas  
www.astd.org*

### **SOCIETY FOR HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

#### **52nd Annual Conference and Exhibition**

*June 25 – 28  
Las Vegas, Nevada  
www.shrm.org/conferences/  
annual*

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE PERSONNEL EXECUTIVES**

#### **Annual Meeting**

*July 29 – August 2  
Princeton, New Jersey  
www.naspe.net*

## **VIEWPOINT IN THIS ISSUE**

**DTAE Commissioner  
Breedon comments on  
technical institute  
responsiveness to  
workforce needs.**

## **Training Most Important Contribution To Workforce Quality, Productivity**

In many respects the nature of work and the workplace have changed dramatically in the last few years. Organizations must now stay abreast of technology that changes almost daily. They must respond to worker expectations noticeably different from past generations. And, with the world as a marketplace, organizations must look constantly for ways to improve productivity.

Most human resource practitioners today regard workplace learning as the single most important contribution to maintaining a qualified workforce and improving productivity. With technology literacy no longer an advantage but a necessity in many occupations, employees must be kept up to date on current applications and must have the opportunity to learn new programs as they come on the market.

Worker values are changing as well. Although workers may be loyal to their profession, they are becoming far less willing to put all their career eggs into a single organizational basket. Workers now expect employers to address their learning needs, and they will choose those employers that provide them with the most opportunities for acquiring new skills.

A considerable body of research supports the worth of employee training to an organization's bottom line. A 1996 study by the National Center on the Educational Quality of the Workforce at the University of Pennsylvania found that a dollar invested by a company in employee education was more than twice as effective in boosting productivity as a dollar invested in new machinery. A survey by the American Management

Association of 1,003 large and mid-sized corporations in 1996 also found that companies that increased their training were twice as likely to report improved profits and productivity.

As it is with any successful endeavor, planning is the operative word in carrying out training. An annual training plan offers the powerful advantages of making a connection to an organization's strategic objectives up front; of targeting training areas of greatest need and biggest payoff; and of finding the best training and the most cost-effective ways to administer it.

Although the classroom setting is still the dominant training delivery method, distance learning (via satellite, telephone lines, and the Internet) and computer-based training have made significant headway in the last decade. Organizations should also factor into their training plans informal, on-the-job training methods, such as job rotations, special assignments, coaching, mentoring, and learning teams.

A 1995 study by the Merit Systems Protection Board on human resource development in the federal government found that

- employees were sent to training for a variety of reasons not always related to performance needs,
- many employees reported not receiving the training they needed to perform their jobs, and
- budget constraints were only part of the problem. More serious were the findings that training needs assessment procedures were often inadequate, and training was rarely linked to strategic planning for the organization. ♦

## viewpoint

# A Range of Training Methods Supports Agency's Mission

## Tech Schools Respond To Workforce Needs

By Dr. Kenneth H. Breeden,  
Commissioner  
Georgia Department of Technical  
and Adult Education

The conditions of Georgia's workforce are changing dramatically, and we must be responsive. Our booming economy has created a demand for skilled workers, and Georgia—like many other states—has a substantial shortfall of workers trained in technical occupations. More than 80 percent of all new jobs today and projected new jobs through 2005 require occupational or professional education beyond high school, but less than a four-year college degree.

The shift in educational requirements is easy to see when we compare the job market of 1950 with that of 2000. Then, 60 percent of U.S. jobs required no special skills. Today, businesses striving to remain competitive in our global economy are becoming increasingly sophisticated and are relying on technology and high-performance workforce strategies as never before. The reality of this competitiveness means that even entry-level manufacturing jobs now require training beyond high school.

Georgia is among several states currently experiencing tremendous growth in the number of information technology (IT) jobs, and increasingly students are turning to technical institutes for training

"The Department of Labor is all about workforce development. It's the reason our agency exists, so making sure our own staff is well trained is vital to our mission," said Training and Staff Development Director Ashley Howard.

In keeping with its reason to be, employee training is a wide-ranging and accessible commodity at the Department of Labor. Ms. Howard says all of the department's 2,000 employees have the opportunity for training each year, whether through the Training and Staff Development Division or through program area training by a technical trainer in the division in which they

in this area. Between fall 1990 and fall 1998 technical institute enrollment of students pursuing IT programs increased 81 percent, from 10,604 to 19,227.

Over the last few years the importance of IT certification programs, such as Microsoft's Certified Systems Engineer (MCSE), A+, and Cisco Systems certification, has risen significantly. Students earning these industry certifications at our technical institutes have in hand credentials respected in today's workplace. And, many students then decide to continue on in our IT degree and diploma programs. In addition to offering industry certifications, our technical institutes have developed and are offering certification in Web site and e-commerce site design.

Because of the high demand for these and other programs offered by our technical institutes and because of our responsiveness to our customers, enrollments have increased for 33 consecutive quarters. Last fall Georgia's technical institutes enrolled 55,057 students—another record-breaking number and a significant nine percent increase over the 1998 fall enrollment.

The need for skilled workers will continue to be high, and the Department of Technical and Adult Education is responding vigorously to that need. We are pleased to be part of the infrastructure for strengthening Georgia's economy by developing skilled workforces in communities throughout the state.

work. The Training and Staff Development Division provides an array of learning delivery methods that includes instructor-led classroom training, self-directed computer-based training, distance learning via teleconferencing, the EXCEL training sessions, and a library of professional development materials. In classroom training last year the division delivered 210 classes to 5,250 participants at 45 locations around the state.

Training provided by the Training and Staff Development Division emphasizes management skills, professional development, and skills specific to various program functions, according to Ms. Howard. She said that in addition to using the *GeorgiaGain Performance Management Process* curriculum, they recently have adopted two other courses to expand the range of their management skills training. One of the new courses is aimed at helping new supervisors make the transition from peer to manager, and the other teaches managers how to create an environment and attitude of commitment rather than merely compliance.

"We regularly provide instructor-led training in our computer lab on PC Fundamentals, Introduction to the Internet, and Windows and for such programs as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint," Ms. Howard said. "Tutorial software for various computer programs is also available so that employees can learn in a self-paced, self-directed manner. And, we have many videotapes, audiotapes, books, and CDs on a wide range of development topics in our library that employees may use to acquire knowledge that will benefit them in the workplace."

If accessibility is a standard by which training programs should be judged, then the Labor Department's use of teleconferencing certainly adds to its ratings. Paul Cornwell, who coordinates teleconferencing and video production



Dr. Kenneth H. Breeden, Commissioner

## newsbriefs



*DOL's Training Division produces about 30 videotape projects each year. Many are used to illustrate training delivered via teleconference and in the classroom.*

for the agency, says that over the past five years teleconferencing has proved its worth in keeping employees up to date on policies and procedures and other information they need to know to do their jobs correctly.

"We have our own satellite and 10 dedicated teleconferencing sites in field offices throughout the state. Teleconferencing is an ideal training medium when information must be communicated consistently. And using this technology saves time and money," Mr. Cornwall said. "Last year we reached virtually every employee in a single teleconference that discussed the pending implementation of the 1998 Workforce Investment Act."

To enhance the agency's ability to meet the challenges of the future, the Training Division annually facilitates a leadership development program through The University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government. Known as EXCEL (Executive Commitment to Excellence in Leadership), Ms. Howard said the program is open to all full-time staff, but enrollment is limited. Selected employees participate in four, three-day training sessions over a 12-month period. Selection is based on job performance, achievement, personal initiative, community involvement, supervisor endorsement, diversity, and geographic location.

The Labor Department's commitment to training for its employees extends beyond its own walls to tuition reimbursement for courses taken at

state universities, colleges, and technical institutes. Ms. Howard said employees can be reimbursed for work-related courses that increase their usefulness in their current job or that prepare them to assume increased responsibilities. Reimbursement is \$75 per semester credit hour and \$100 per course for books. Employees must earn at least a C in a course to be reimbursed.

"Certainly, no single training approach can ensure that all performance needs are met. Making use of all the training methods at our disposal allows us to achieve a better-trained and thus more productive workforce," Ms. Howard said.

## Distance Learning Appeals to Techno-savvy Employees

A majority of workers (61 percent) would like to receive training or education via distance learning, according to a survey of 1,005 adult U.S. workers in January 2000 by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University and the Center for Survey Research and Analysis (CSRA) at the University of Connecticut. However, only 26 percent of workers said they had participated in distance

*Cont'd. on page 4*

◆ As a result of the National Telecommuting and Air Quality Act of 1999, the **U.S. Department of Transportation has launched test programs** in five metropolitan areas that it hopes will encourage telecommuting and reduce air pollution caused by motor vehicles. The five areas are Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. The telework pilots are being directed by the National Environmental Policy Institute, DOT, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Energy Department, and local employers and governments. Employers that allow employees to telecommute regularly will receive pollution reduction credits, which they may sell. Entities regulated under the Clean Air Act could buy the credits as a means of complying with air regulations. See [www.nepi.org/telework/intro.htm](http://www.nepi.org/telework/intro.htm).

◆ The **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)** issued a directive in February that says it **will not inspect telecommuters' home offices** for violations of federal safety and health rules, nor will it expect employers to conduct inspections. The directive states also that employers generally will not be considered liable for an employee's home office. The February directive came as a result of an OSHA opinion letter in November 1999 that overstated the application of OSHA regulations to the home environment. See [www.osha.gov](http://www.osha.gov) for a copy of the new directive.

◆ The percentage of companies offering **employee assistance programs (EAP)** doubled from 1994 to 1998, rising to 48 percent of companies with more than 100 workers and 15 percent of small businesses, according to an employee benefits survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor. The survey also found that employee use of assistance programs increased nearly 80 percent during that time. The reason: Services offered by EAPs have evolved beyond substance abuse to include unresolved personal and work-related problems. Psychological distress (depression and anxiety) followed by marital/relationship problems and family issues have become the primary areas addressed by EAP counselors.

## Distance Learning — Cont'd. from page 3

learning, which the study defines as instruction transmitted via audio, video, or computer to individuals located at one or more places in a variety of educational settings.

Not surprisingly, of the 61 percent of workers who want to participate in distance learning, those more familiar with technology expressed a higher interest in the process and were more likely to have experienced it. Seventy-two percent of technophiles—defined in the study as using a computer every day at work and home and banking and shopping online—want to use distance learning, and more than one third of them had already tried it. Sixty-nine percent of power users—defined as using a computer every day at work

and home but not banking or shopping online—had distance learning on their wish list; 39 percent of power users had experienced distance learning.

The gap between opportunity and desire widens among the 19 percent of workers labeled exiles—those who had not used a computer in the past month. Only nine percent of those workers had experienced distance learning, but 45 percent would like to.

Again not a surprise, those with college degrees expressed higher interest in distance learning and were more likely to have used it. Forty-three percent of post-graduates had experienced distance learning and 64 percent would like to. Among college graduates 33 percent said they had tried it, and 66

percent would like to. Only 15 percent of high school graduates had experienced distance learning.

The Heldrich Center and the CSRA survey the general public quarterly on a critical workforce issue. The survey for the first quarter of 2000, called *Nothing But Net: American Workers and the Information Economy*, focused on workers' experience with computers in the workplace, workers' perceptions about their future in the information economy, and the role of government in the information age. A copy of the survey report is available online at [www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/news2.cfm?id=20](http://www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/news2.cfm?id=20).



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